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**JANUARY** 2025

# ETHIOPIA

## ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA VOW TO STRENGTHEN TIES

3<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY 2025

The diplomatic dispute between Ethiopia and Somalia that had led to tense regional relations has been resolved, Somalia's foreign minister says.

Ahmed Moalim Fiqi's statement, carried by state TV, said Somalia had made no concessions. Ethiopia has not commented on the Somali claim, but said the two countries had agreed to "strengthen bilateral relations".

The two neighbours had been at loggerheads since last January when landlocked Ethiopia signed a maritime deal with the breakaway Somaliland, which Somalia considers as part of its territory.

Friday's statement follows a visit to Somalia by an Ethiopian delegation in the latest sign of détente after a Turkey-brokered deal announced last month.

Led by Ethiopian Defence Minister Aisha Mohammed, the visit focused on the future of the African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission in Somalia.

Ethiopia has thousands of troops stationed in Somalia which are not part of the AU force and it has not been clear what role they will play in the future.

In its statement, Ethiopia said the two countries had agreed to collaborate on the mission.

A statement from Somalia's foreign ministry was a little more equivocal saying the country had "expressed its willingness to consider Ethiopia's request to contribute forces" to the mission.

- Ethiopia-Somaliland deal: Can the Horn of Africa rift be healed?
- Ethiopia warns against invasion amid regional tensions
- Why Ethiopia is so alarmed by an Egypt-Somalia alliance

Somalia had previously said it could expel Ethiopian troops over the Somaliland deal.

Throughout last year, tension was high after Ethiopia announced plans to build a naval base in Somaliland. The breakaway republic said the deal included a commitment for Ethiopia to officially recognise it as an independent country, but Addis Ababa never confirmed this.

At the time Somalia said it saw the deal as an act of "aggression" and an affront to its sovereignty.

Somaliland, which broke away from Somalia more than 30 years ago, has long been pushing for recognition.

Just weeks ago it would have been unthinkable for officials from Ethiopia's defence ministry to be holding talks in the Somali capital, Mogadishu.

Relations between the neighbours were so bad, there were fears a wider regional feud was brewing - with Ethiopia on one side and Egypt backing the Mogadishu government.



But as a result of Turkey's mediation, things have improved, with both countries agreeing to recognise each other's sovereignty.

According to the Ankara joint declaration of 12 December 2024, the Horn of Africa neighbours are to reconvene in February to hold "technical talks".

Until then, they are to strive to reach "mutually beneficial commercial arrangements" to

ensure Ethiopia gains access to the sea "under Somalia's sovereignty".

It is not clear if Ethiopia has discarded the deal it signed with Somaliland.

Somali state TV quoted Fiqi as saying "that file... was closed after Somalia's demands were tabled and accepted but not due to concession or setting aside the principles we used to defend our course".

*Additional reporting by Will Ross and BBC Monitoring*

## BRINGING A TYRANNICAL ETHIOPIAN QUEEN AND HER TWINS TO LIFE

4<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

Playwright Banna Desta has brought to life an often-overlooked ancient African civilisation in her latest work - a compelling audio drama about an increasingly tyrannical queen and her scheming twin sons.

"As well as wanting the audience to be entertained - because the play is good fun - I wanted to add another dimension to people's understanding of Africa," Desta tells the BBC.

"I wanted to write about a time when the continent wasn't afflicted by colonialism and there were thriving societies," she says.

The Abyssinians is set in the 5th Century in the Aksumite Empire, also known as the Kingdom of Aksum.

Aksum was a wealthy and influential monarchy that at its height spanned what is now northern Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, southern Saudi Arabia and western Yemen. It lasted almost 1,000 years, from approximately 100BC to AD960.

It was where Christianity first came to Africa and where some of the continent's earliest coins were minted.

It lay at the heart of a trade network between India and the Mediterranean and its ships controlled the Red Sea trade through the port of Adulis and the inland routes of north-eastern Africa.

In the third century, it was considered one of the world's four great powers, alongside Persia, Rome and China.

"I feel like Aksum is completely excluded out of that picture. Ethiopia is a cradle of civilisation - and yet I feel that it is never really included in our understanding of global history," says Desta.

She chose that part of the world and that period of history because of her personal connections. She was born in the US to a mother from Tigray in northern Ethiopia and a father from Eritrea - the very areas that were at the heart of the old Aksumite empire.

"The impulse was really just wanting to learn more about a pre-colonial era - and I thought a wonderful place to start is my own heritage and ancestral lineage."

The Abyssinians, released by Audible and directed by Shariffa Ali, is Desta's first audio play. It is a tragicomedy that mixes historical fact with the author's imagination.

The play is "really also about the ways in which people hold on to their humanity in periods of immense change", Desta says.

It tells the story of a monarchy at a crossroads in history.

Queen Yodit must decide which of her twin sons - Kaleb or Negus - must succeed her to the throne, just as she is contending with social and economic upheaval and clashing beliefs about religion and rights. There is also romance.

"Queen Yodit is... complex, regal, cunning, raw, sensual and compelling," says Danielle Deadwyler - the Bafta-nominated movie star who played the role.

The character of Yodit was loosely inspired by the real Queen Yodit - or Judith - who reigned at a different time to the period in which the play is set.

She is a figure shrouded in mystery

because of the lack of historical records and conflicting folklore about who she was.

She is seen by some as dictatorial and instrumental in Aksum's downfall, says Desta - who travelled to Ethiopia as part of her research for the play.

"I thought that she was a good jumping-off point for that type of character," Desta says.

"I think a lot of times the characters of female leaders have to be so 'on point' - and I love the idea of a woman being a tyrant in this period of history."

Writer James Baldwin once said that artists are "emotional or spiritual historians" - and those words resonated profoundly with Desta as she wrote the play.

"I wanted to explore the full spectrum of human emotions - the characters' private feelings, the things that they struggle with as human beings that have nothing to do with their public roles," she tells the BBC.

Queen Yodit was a character who Desta felt did not have much love in her life.

"A lot of her reactions to the world are coming from that place of not being cherished as a partner and not really necessarily feeling like she has a place or that she has chosen to be a leader," Desta says.

Another female character written to break stereotypes is Makeda, played by Arsema Thomas of Bridgerton spin-off Queen Charlotte fame.

She is sent to work as a servant in the royal

household to pay off her father's debts. But she is also someone "who can think for herself, can think bigger than her station in life and is a global thinker".

Despite being set in a world of antiquity, the dialogue and dry humour in *The Abyssinians* makes it feel modern and relevant.

Queen Yodit, especially, is fond of dropping a snide comment right in the middle of a serious moment.

The production features an original Ethio-jazz score by DA Mekonnen, an Ethiopian-American musician, and Andrew Orkin - and features the Ethiopian-born multi-instrumentalist Kibrom Birhane.

"The score parallels and complements the tone of the play," says Desta "because I feel like a lot of Ethiopian music has that ancient quality and then jazz is that sort of contemporary spin."

Tony-winner André De Shields described

being in *The Abyssinians* as an "opportunity of returning to one's ancient culture" and an illustration of "the power of art to transform lives".

It was crucial to Desta that actors of the black diaspora play the characters.

The cast also includes Zainab Jah, who in 2021 won the best actress award for *Farewell Amor* at Fespaco, Africa's leading film festival.

Chukwudi Iwuji, who began his acting career with the Royal Shakespeare Company in the UK, and Phillip James Brannon, best known for his Broadway roles and the movie *Contagion*, also star.

"The talent was amazing," Desta says, "I know that that doesn't really happen for a lot of early playwrights, so I'm especially grateful."

Desta's next goal is to get *The Abyssinians* on to the stage with, she hopes, the same cast.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0lg6151p32o>

## COULD A MANGO-FLAVOURED PILL END INTESTINAL WORMS?

11<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

A new tablet being developed to cure intestinal worms has shown promising results in trials and could help eradicate the parasitic infection, which affects about 1.5 billion people globally, researchers say.

The mango-flavoured pill is a combination of two existing anti-parasitic drugs that, used together, appear more effective in getting rid of worms.

These worms are caught through contact with food or water that has been infected by soil contaminated with worm eggs and infections cause severe gastrointestinal symptoms,

malnutrition and anaemia.

Researchers say the pill could help overcome any future drug resistance problems and better manage the disease on a large scale.

The parasites, also known as soil-transmitted helminths (STHs), include whipworm and hookworm and are endemic in many developing countries where hygiene levels are poor.

Many of those affected are children and there is no preventative treatment other than better sanitation.

According a study, called "ALIVE", published in the Lancet, this new pill could help countries most affected reach goals set by the [World Health Organization](#) to eliminate the diseases.

It would be taken as a fixed-dose of either one single pill or three tablets over consecutive days.

Researchers from eight European and African institutions say it would be a simple way to cure large numbers of people in mass treatment programmes.

"It is easy to administer, as it is one single pill," says project leader Prof Jose Muñoz.

"Also, we hope that combining two drugs with different mechanisms of action will reduce the risk of the parasites becoming drug-resistant," Prof Muñoz says.

Once a person is infected, the parasites root themselves in people's digestive tracts.

While the drug albendazole is good at treating some species of STH, it appears to be becoming

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwy17n3zggero>

less effective in tackling some others.

During a clinical trial involving 1,001 children aged between 5-18 in Ethiopia, Kenya and Mozambique, it was found to be more effective on more types of infection when combined with the drug ivermectin.

However, researchers said the results were not conclusive on how well it treated threadworm.

Prof. Hany Elsheikha, an expert in parasitology at the University of Nottingham said the pill could be a "significant improvement over other treatments" and could be used against multiple parasites.

"There are some challenges with existing medications...so this could be a major, major addition."

However, he said that while the study was "promising", it had "some gaps".

"We don't know if the results would be the same for adults, mature people, younger kids, people in other parts of the world."

The results of the trial have been submitted to regulators in Europe and Africa, with decisions expected in early 2025.

Participants are now being recruited to take part in a further trial on 20,000 people in Kenya and Ghana.

Dr Stella Kepha, a researcher at Kenya Medical Research Institute who worked on the study said the pill had "great potential for improving the health of affected communities" but that there was still "work to do" to widely roll out the treatment.

## UGANDA

### UGANDAN MILITARY COURT RULES OPPOSITION FIGURE CAN BE TRIED FOR TREACHERY

THE MOVE ESCALATES THE CASE AGAINST KIZZA BESIGYE AS A TREACHERY CONVICTION IS PUNISHABLE BY THE DEATH PENALTY.

14<sup>TH</sup> JAN 2025

A Ugandan military court has ruled that prominent opposition figure Kizza Besigye can be tried on the charge of treachery, for which he could face the death penalty if convicted.

The ruling on Tuesday escalates the legal trouble Besigye faces in the run-up to presidential elections scheduled for 2026.

Besigye, who has contested the presidency four times, [went missing](#) in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, on November 16.

Days later, he and his co-accused, an assistant named Obeid Lutale, appeared before a military court in Kampala, the Ugandan capital.

Besigye was charged with illegal possession of a firearm and a charge relating to the alleged solicitation of military support overseas in order to destabilize national security.

The opposition leader, who denied the charges, has since been remanded in custody.

A military prosecutor amended the charge sheet to include treachery and introduced a third suspect, who is a serving army officer.

Besigye, 68, has faced arrest and assault many times in his political career. But he has never

been convicted of a crime.

United Kingdom-based Amnesty International has called for Besigye's release, saying his "abduction clearly violated international human rights law and the process of extradition with its requisite fair trial protections".

United States-based Human Rights Watch said Besigye's trial is "the latest example of Uganda's authorities misusing military courts and military-related charges to clamp down on the opposition".

President Yoweri Museveni has long been criticized by human rights groups for alleged violations against opposition figures.

Although Museveni, who has held power since 1986, is expected to seek re-election, he has not confirmed it yet.

Museveni has no obvious successor within the ranks of the governing National Resistance Movement, which is creating widespread fears over an unpredictable political transition.

Besigye, a qualified physician who retired from Uganda's military at the rank of colonel, is a former president of the opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party.

With Besigye at its helm, the FDC was for many years Uganda's most prominent opposition group.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/14/ugandan-military-court-rules-opposition-figure-can-be-tried-for-treachery>

## TANZANIA

### FIERY TANZANIAN POLITICIAN TUNDU LISSU ELECTED TO HEAD OPPOSITION PARTY

22<sup>ND</sup> JANUARY 2025

Prominent Tanzanian politician Tundu Lissu has been elected chairman of the main opposition party Chadema, ousting long-running leader Freeman Mbowe in an intense race.

Lissu campaigned for changes in the party leadership while criticising the way it was being run, amid heated exchanges that were seen as exposing internal divisions.

He accused Mbowe of having changed, and being too reconciliatory towards the CCM party that has been power since independence, which he said had made people lose trust in Chadema.

Mbowe, the party's chairman for more than 20 years, campaigned on grounds that he still had more work to do to strengthen the party.

He accused Lissu of making accusations against him without providing any evidence.

The party's elections, which concluded on Wednesday morning, were seen as defining the party's direction, with presidential elections due in October this year.

- Why Samia's hesitant reforms are fuelling Tanzanian political anger

Mbowe has conceded the loss, posting on his X account that he "wholly accepted the decision of the party's assembly" alongside a photo of himself and Lissu.

"I congratulate Tundu Lissu and his colleagues for being trusted to take the responsibility of the party leadership. I wish them all the best

in moving our party forward," he said.

In a closely fought election, Lissu garnered 513 votes (51.5%) against Mbowe's 482 (48.3%).

As he was declared the winner, Lissu said the party had set the standard for internal democracy and called on other political parties in the country to follow their example.

Lissu is known for his fiery brand of politics that has often put him in heated arguments with fellow politicians, especially those from the ruling party.

He survived an assassination attempt in 2017 during President John Magufuli's administration. He had more than 20 operations in hospitals abroad after having been shot at least 16 times.

He briefly returned in 2020 but lost to Magufuli in that year's president election.

Lissu then spent years in exile until he returned in 2023, after President Samia Suluhu Hassan had taken over following Magufuli's death in 2021.

He has since accused President Samia of repression against critics similar to that of the Magufuli era.

He has also strongly spoken out against human rights violations and recent abductions and disappearances of citizens, including opposition officials.

Lissu himself and other opposition politicians have been arrested in recent months amid a government crackdown on opposition demonstrations.

During the party contest, he framed himself as a fearless leader and his win is seen as a shift in the party's direction to offer a strong challenge to the government as the country

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8r5epkj013o>

### TANZANIA CONFIRMS MARBURG VIRUS OUTBREAK AFTER INITIAL DENIAL

20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

Tanzania's president has announced an outbreak of Marburg virus, an Ebola-like virus, just a week after her health minister denied that there were any cases in the country.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan said at a press conference on Monday that health authorities had confirmed one case of Marburg in the north-western region of Kagera.

"We are confident that we will overcome this challenge once again," Samia said, referring to a previous outbreak in Tanzania two years ago.

On 14 January, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported a suspected Marburg outbreak in the country, having recorded nine suspected cases and eight deaths over five days in Kagera.

But Tanzania's Health Minister Jenista Mhagama said in a statement that after samples had been analysed, all suspected cases were found negative for Marburg.

gears towards elections later this year.

On Sunday, President Samia was unanimously nominated as the presidential candidate of her ruling CCM party.

Chadema has not yet selected its candidate.

Tanzanian analyst Nicodemus Minde told the BBC that it was likely that either Lissu or Mbowe would be the party's flag-bearer if there was no fallout after the party's election.

- What is the Marburg virus and how dangerous is it?

At Monday's press briefing, which was held jointly with the WHO, President Samia said her government had stepped up its efforts and that a rapid response team had been dispatched to follow up on all suspected cases.

Marburg is highly infectious, with symptoms including fever, muscle pains, diarrhoea, vomiting and, in some cases, death through extreme blood loss.

On average, the virus kills half of the people it infects, according to the WHO.

Tanzania says that along with the one confirmed case, authorities took samples from 24 other people suspected of having Marburg. These all-tested negatives.



Meanwhile, the cause of the eight deaths reported by the WHO has yet to be revealed.

Tanzania experienced its first Marburg outbreak in March 2023 in the Bukoba district. It killed six people and lasted for nearly two months.

WHO director general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the global risk from Tanzania's current outbreak was "low".

"Even though there is no approved treatment or vaccines, outbreaks can be stopped quickly," he said. "WHO advises against restrictions. Now is the time for collaboration."

On Thursday, Africa CDC, the African Union's public health agency, said more than 300 contacts had been identified for further testing. Health workers make up 56 of these contacts, while 16 on the list are known to

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3e1v1nywy7o>

## MAN, WHO RAN LENGTH OF AFRICA BEGINS NEW CHALLENGE

18<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

A man who ran the entire length of Africa has begun his latest challenge – to climb Mount Kilimanjaro.

Russ Cook, nicknamed "Hardest Geezer", completed his previous endurance challenge in April last year after 352 days.

Despite complications with visas, health scares, geopolitical issues and an armed robbery, the 27-year-old, from Worthing, West Sussex, raised more than £1m for charity.

Nine months on, Mr Cook has selected a group

have had direct contact with those suspected to have had Marburg.

The International Health Regulations (IHR) of 2005 require countries to report public health events and emergencies that could cross borders. Kagera is a transit hub with many people travelling to and from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda.

In December, neighbouring Rwanda declared that an outbreak in the country, which had infected 66 people and killed 15, was over.

The Marburg virus is transmitted to humans from fruit bats and then through contact with bodily fluids of infected individuals.

There are no specific treatments or a vaccine for the virus, although trials are under way.

of people he will guide up Africa's highest mountain as part of his newest venture, Hardest Adventures.

The group arrived in Tanzania on Wednesday, before beginning the climb on Thursday, which is expected to take seven days.

"We've got 5,680 metres to make it to the top. Right now, it's pretty hot. But when we get to the top, it's going to be freezing cold," he said.

"We've seen monkeys, we've gone for a little a swim in the river, and there's positive mental

attitude flying all about the camp."

He added: "It's going to be one big old adventure, baby."

The group walked about 6.2 miles (10km) on the first day of the climb.

Mr Cook's previous extreme challenge began at South Africa's most southerly point on 22 April 2023, and finished more than 10,190

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgkjj3v072po>

## 'MANHANDLED AND CHOKED' - TANZANIAN ACTIVIST RECOUNTS ABDUCTION

13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

Prominent Tanzanian activist Maria Sarungi Tsehai, who has said she was abducted by armed men in Kenya and released after several hours, has recounted her ordeal.

On Monday, she told a press briefing, she was manhandled, choked and shouted at by four unknown assailants who forced her into a vehicle in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, on Sunday afternoon.

"I am sure that the reason for abduction was to get access to my social media and [because of] the whistleblowing job that I do," she said, as her abductors kept asking how to unlock her phone.

Ms Tsehai is a staunch critic of Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan, and has accused her government of bringing "tyranny back" to the country.

She fled to neighbouring Kenya in 2020, seeking asylum after facing increasing threats coming from the government of late President John Magufuli.

Describing what happened on Sunday, the

miles (16,400km) north in Tunisia.

He had originally planned to complete the equivalent of 360 marathons in 240 days, but extended the challenge due to complications.

He has also released a book, titled Mind Over Miles, detailing his experiences during the challenge.

activist said she was freed and left on a "rough road, in a dark place".

She then walked to a main road and approached people for help.

Ms Tsehai said she was able to contact her husband on a laptop and then ordered a taxi home.

She blamed the Tanzanian government for what happened but said she thought the abductors were both Kenyan and Tanzanian.

Officials from neither government have commented on the incident.

- Why Samia's hesitant reforms are fuelling Tanzanian political anger
- 'We live in fear' - forced expulsions taint Kenya's safe haven image

Upon her release on Sunday, she shared a video

to her 1.3 million followers on X, appearing visibly shaken and emotional, but said: "I have been saved."

Roland Ebole, spokesperson for Amnesty International Kenya, told the BBC that Ms Tsehai's abduction set a "very dangerous precedent".

The Law Society of Kenya president, Faith Odhiambo, said on X: "We will not allow our country to be used as a haven for picking up individuals," she said at an evening press conference.

Ms Tsehai is a fierce advocate for land rights and freedom of expression in Tanzania.

There have been concerns that Tanzania could be returning to the repressive rule of late President John Magufuli, despite his successor Samia lifting a ban on opposition gatherings and promising to restore competitive politics.

Last year, dozens of opposition were arrested and some were brutally killed. One senior opposition leader died after being doused in acid.

Human Rights Watch described the rise in arrests of opposition activists as a "bad sign" ahead of the 2025 presidential elections, which will take place in October.

Change Tanzania, a movement founded by Ms Tsehai, said in a statement on X it believed she had been taken by Tanzanian security agents "operating beyond Tanzania borders to silence government legitimate criticism".

It added that her "courage in standing up for justice has made her a target".

In recent months, she had expressed concerns about her safety, reporting an incident where two unidentified men were seen looking for her at her home while she was away.

Kenya has a history of enabling foreign governments to abduct its citizens and carry out forcible extraditions, breaching international law.

Last year, Ugandan opposition leader, Kizza Besigye, was kidnapped in Nairobi, allegedly by Ugandan security officials, and taken across the border for trial by a court martial.

The Ugandan government said Kenya helped them in the operation - but the Kenyan government denied this.

Mr Ebole told the BBC "it might be another repeat" of Mr Besigye's situation.

Internally, Kenya has been gripped by a wave of disappearances, following last year's youth-led protests against a series of planned tax rises.

Kenyan minister Justin Muturi hits out over abductions

On Sunday, a serving minister whose son was abducted in June last year criticised the government over its handling of the matter.

Public Service Cabinet Secretary Justin

Muturi said the abduction of his son - who was later released - remained unexplained, even though he was a senior member of the government.

At the time, he was serving as the attorney-general.

"My son was personally abducted and disappeared making us anxious and at that time, I was the Attorney General of Kenya and a member of the National Security Council," he said at a press conference, adding that he had

Source; <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd7dxz48e01o>

## TANZANIA'S FUEL REVOLUTION SLOWED DOWN BY LACK OF FILLING STATIONS

5<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

A revolution in vehicle fuel is gaining momentum in Tanzania, but a lack of filling stations means it is stuck in second gear.

Like Nigeria and some other countries on the continent, Tanzania is beginning to embrace compressed natural gas (CNG) as an alternative to petrol and diesel.

It is seen as cleaner and better for the environment than those fossil fuels, but its relative cheapness is the biggest draw for the 5,000 or so motorists in the East African state who have embraced the change - particularly commercial drivers.

This represents a small fraction of Tanzania's vehicles, but the early adopters are paving the way for a wider acceptance of CNG - the government reportedly wants near total adoption by the middle of the century.

Tanzania has large reserves of gas under the sea and for those filling up, CNG can cost less than half its petrol equivalent.

received not answers despite reaching out to the top security officials.

A state-funded rights group saying that over 80 people were abducted in the last six months. The abductions started in the wake of deadly anti-tax protests last June and have continued against critics of the government.

A few have been released in recent weeks, and there are growing calls for all who have been abducted to be freed.

The potential saving was enough to persuade taxi owner Samuel Amos Irube to part with about 1.5m Tanzanian shillings (\$620; £495) to convert his three-wheeled vehicle - known locally as a bajaji - to CNG.

But now, having to get the gas twice a day, he often spends more time waiting at a filling station in the largest city, Dar es Salaam, than he does earning money.

There are only four places in Tanzania's commercial hub where he can fill up.

Quietly frustrated, he says he has to wait for at least three hours every time he wants to refuel, but the savings make it worth it, as he spends just 40% of what he would on the equivalent amount of petrol.

The slow-moving queues of vehicles at the



Ubungu CNG station snake down the road. Things are orderly – there are three clear lines, one for cars and two for bajajis – but the irritation is palpable.

Medadi Kichungo Ngoma, in the queue for two hours already, stares at the vehicles ahead of him as he waits by his silver pick-up truck.

He tells the BBC that he was among the first people in the city to convert his vehicle, which involved installing a large cylinder in the back of the pick-up, and reminisces about the short queues.

“Sometimes the attendant would have to be called to serve us,” he says.

He complains that the infrastructure has not expanded to accommodate the increasing demand.

This is also the refrain heard at the largest of the city’s CNG filling stations near the airport.

Sadiki Christian Mkumbuka has waited here for three hours with his bajaji.

“The queue is very long,” he says, adding that “we should have as many stations as there are for petrol vehicles”.

But the price consideration will keep people coming back.

“I pay 15,000 shillings (\$6; £5) to fill my 11kg gas tank, which goes for about 180km,” says another motorist who introduces himself as Juma, adding that this is less than half the cost for petrol to cover the same distance.

The push to encourage motorists to adopt CNG-powered vehicles in Tanzania was

hatched over a decade ago but did not begin in earnest until 2018.

Those in charge of the project acknowledge that they did not foresee the rapid rise in demand.

Aristides Kato, the CNG project manager at the state-oil firm, the Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation (TPDC), tells the BBC that there “has been a very drastic increase” recently in the use of natural gas by vehicle owners.

“We found ourselves not having enough infrastructure to support the demand for gas-using vehicles,” he admits.

The authorities, though, want more people to switch to CNG because it is a relatively clean-burning fossil fuel that results in fewer emissions of nearly all types of air pollutants, according to the UN.

Plus the locally available natural gas should allow for cheaper prices than petrol. But the cost of converting a vehicle plus the lower mileage that a full tank gives a motorist compared to petrol or diesel may be putting some people off.

However, the country manager of Taqa Arabia, an Egyptian company that runs the filling station near the airport, sees the growing demand as a “positive sign that CNG use has started to develop in Tanzania”.

Amr Aboushady says his firm plans to build more stations and hopes to “replicate our success story in Egypt by helping the [Tanzanian] government best utilise natural gas as an affordable, reliable, cleaner source of energy”.

Egypt has pioneered the use of CNG on the continent, with about half a million vehicles

converted to a dual-fuel system since the 1990s.

Other African countries that have approved CNG use for vehicles include South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique and Ethiopia.

The authorities in Tanzania are committed to rolling out more infrastructure and hope to encourage more private investors to get involved.

A central CNG “mother station” is being built

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx2pggj3g3po>

in Dar es Salaam by TPDC, which will supply gas to smaller stations around the country.

In addition, TPDC is acquiring five mobile CNG units that will be located in Dar es Salaam as well as the capital, Dodoma, and Morogoro.

These measures should in the medium-term lead to shorter queues, but for the time being the lack of filling stations will continue to frustrate Tanzania’s CNG pioneers.

# RWANDA

## DR CONGO UPDATES: RWANDA-BACKED M23 REBELS TIGHTEN GRIP ON GOMA

29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

### Here's what happened today

We'll be closing this live page soon, so let's bring you up to speed with today's top developments:

- Civilians and foreign workers, including World Bank staff and private military contractors hired by the DRC, flee the country's east as M23 fighters tighten their grip on Goma.
- The Rwandan-backed rebels' control most of the key city, with sporadic gunfire heard in its outskirts.
- Electricity remains cut off in the city of about two million people, while aid groups warn that hospitals are overwhelmed with the influx of wounded.
- DRC President Felix Tshisekedi is expected to address the nation later on Wednesday, in his first public statement since M23 advanced on Goma.
- Kenya had announced Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame would attend a virtual crisis summit today, but Congolese state media said the country's president would not take part.
- Rwanda's ambassador-at-large for the Great Lakes region Vincent Karega has told AFP the M23 advance "will continue" into neighbouring South Kivu province.
- More about private military contractors leaving DRC
- At a border crossing between Goma and

its Rwandan twin city of Gisenyi, Reuters reporters saw dozens of white men, some in fatigues, coming over to the Rwandan side and lining up to have their luggage examined by police sniffer dogs. They submitted to being body-searched by Rwandan officers.

- UN sources and Rwandan officials said they were mercenaries hired by the DRC's government, Reuters reported. Several held Romanian passports. One told the news agency he was Romanian and had been in Goma about two years. After being searched, the mercenaries boarded coaches and were driven away, it added
- Separately, a Romanian private military contractor who only gave the name Emile told AFP, "We weren't on a battlefield, we were here to train and help with artillery."
- He added, "What I learned is that anything can happen. I came I did my work and now I am happy to go back and be with my family."
- Angola calls for 'urgent' talks, demands Rwanda troops exit DRC
- Joao Lourenco, the African Union's mediator between Rwanda and the DRC, has called for for the "immediate withdrawal" of Rwanda's troops from the DRC.
- A statement from Angola president's office also called for leaders of both countries to urgently meet in the Angolan capital of Luanda to discuss the conflict.

- Lourenco "appeals for the immediate withdrawal of the Rwanda Defence Forces from the Congolese territory" and the "convening of a tripartite summit in Luanda, on an urgent basis", it said.
- Last month, a meeting between Tshisekedi and Kagame as part of an Angola-led peace process was cancelled due to lack of agreement.
- M23 rebels move south towards Bukavu: Report
- Five diplomatic and security sources have told Reuters that M23 fights are moving south towards Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province.
- The sources, one of whom was in direct contact with the rebels, said the rebels were advancing along the western side of Lake Kivu, south from the town of Minova,

according to the news agency.

- To reach Bukavu, they would have to seize Kavumu, where the city's airport is located, and overcome Burundian soldiers who have been deployed to beef up the DRC's defences.
- The report could not be independently verified.
- Earlier, Vincent Karega, Rwanda's ambassador-at-large for the Great Lakes region, had said he expected M23's advance to "continue" into South Kivu province.
- "They [M23] will continue into South Kivu, because Goma cannot be an end on its own, unless in between they get good dialogue and negotiation with the government in Kinshasa, which I doubt," he told AFP.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2025/1/29/dr-congo-live-news-rwanda-backed-m23-rebels-tighten-grip-on-goma>

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